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## REVIEWS.

### RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF STRICT PSYCHOLOGY.

THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: A Study in Human Nature.  
Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion, Delivered at Edinburgh  
in 1901-02. By William James, LL.D., etc. Longmans, Green & Co.  
London and New York.

THAT this latest work of Prof. James, of Harvard, is a brilliant and suggestive treatment of the subject with which it deals goes without saying. Dr. James is spoken of in a recent English editorial review of this book as "the great American psychologist," and of his worthiness of this title there can probably be little question, based as it is upon several scientific treatises of international repute.

Naturally, it is the *subjective* side of religion with which Prof. James, as a psychologist, deals; it is not with churches or creeds that he has immediately to do, but with the inner aspect of religion—with religious experience considered as a psychological phenomenon, pure and simple. As Kant entitled one of his latest works "Religion within the Bounds of Reason Only" ("Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft"), so Prof. James might have given to these lectures of his the title, "Religion within the Bounds of Strict Psychology." Such a title would show at once the value of these studies and their necessary limitations. They do throw a considerable light upon religious experience considered on its psychological and, as we may say, pathological side; but it can hardly be claimed for this book that it is a contribution to the objective content of religious thought, either Christian or other. Indeed, the author himself would be in all probability the last to make any such claim for it. Of any objective or positive content of religious truth, when Prof. James has finished with his analysis, in fact very little remains.

We have to turn to the closing lecture, entitled "Conclusions," to find what Prof. James considers to be the positive intellectual content of religion. It amounts to this

(pp. 507, 508): "While it is true that the warring gods and formulas of the various religions do indeed cancel each other, there is a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts: (1) An uneasiness; and (2) its solution. 1. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand. 2. The solution is a sense that *we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers." Then follows a description of the deliverance, and so one is led to inquire concerning the reality of the higher power. The author's hypotheses are two: 1. The subconscious (or subliminal) self as intermediating between nature and the higher region. 2. The higher region, which Prof. James calls "God." This expression "God," as used by the author, in reality means simply that which is "more" than the individual; that power or powers (Prof. James prefers the pluralistic hypothesis) which is "coterminous and continuous" with the higher part of the soul, which is "operative in the universe outside of" the individual, and which the latter can "keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself, when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck." He holds that the higher region, or "God," produces real effects in nature; but what these effects are, "apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state," he does not know. As to immortality, he holds it to be an open question (p. 524). As to the question between monotheism and polytheism, our author is undecided, though he inclines to the latter alternative (pp. 525, 526).

It is evident, therefore, that if one expects to find in this book a positive contribution to religious faith he will be disappointed. Prof. James makes short work of positive doctrines concerning God, whether these teachings be metaphysical or moral. (See Lecture XVIII., on Philosophy.) But it is on the subjective side of the religious life and experience that we shall find these lectures suggestive and illuminating, and that in no common degree, owing to the

author's powers of acute analysis and brilliant exposition. The opening lecture, entitled "Religion and Neurology," forms the fitting point of departure. The neurological conditions which to a certain extent enter into and modify the religious life are remarked. Following this, the general principle of the "reality of the unseen" is laid down. The "religion of healthy-mindedness" or the religion of the "once-born" is then illustrated by copious extracts from religious writers of various schools, these persons being such as have not (at least, not consciously to themselves) passed through any radical inner change of religious life or experience. In the following lecture on "The Sick Soul" extracts are given illustrating the profound unrest, pain, and even fear which have agitated many minds in their search for religious peace and rest. Under the head of "The Divided Self" and "Conversion" illustrations are given of the religious process or experience whereby souls that have been in the condition of unrest have attained to spiritual health and happiness. The author has here some very suggestive remarks on the psychological phenomena of what he calls "the shifting of men's centers of personal energy within them, and the lighting up of new crises of emotion." "The psychology of character changes" is an expressive phrase used in this connection. "To say that a man is 'converted' means, in these (*i. e.*, in psychological) terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims now form the habitual center of his energy." This seems admirably expressed from the psychologist's point of view.

Prof. James explains the "phenomena of conversion" as "partly due to explicitly conscious processes of thought and will, but as due largely also to the subconscious incubation and maturing of motives deposited by the experiences of life. When ripe, the results hatch out, or burst into flower" (p. 230).

The author's treatment of what he calls the subliminal or "ultra-marginal consciousness" is most suggestive (see pp. 233, fol.).

A noteworthy admission from the point of view of the psychologist is made on page 241, where Prof. A. Coe is quoted with approval as saying that "the ultimate test of religious values is nothing psychological, nothing definable in terms of *how it happens*, but something ethical, definable only in terms of *what is attained*."

Moreover, Prof. James clearly states that the science of religions cannot be an equivalent for living religion (p. 489). The life of religion, as contrasted with science in general and with the science of religions in particular, is intensely personal. "Religious thought is carried on in terms of personality, this being in the world of religion the one fundamental fact. To-day, quite as much as at any previous age, the religious individual will tell you that the divine meets him on the basis of his personal concerns."

"Science, on the other hand, has ended by utterly repudiating the personal point of view. She catalogues her elements and records her laws indifferent as to what purpose may be shown forth by them, and constructs her theories quite careless of their bearing on human anxieties and fates." If, then, the question be asked whether religion is simply to be regarded as a "survival" of primitive thought, and, as such, destined to pass away as human culture advances, Prof. James has this word: "In spite of the appeal which this impersonality of the scientific attitude makes to a certain magnanimity of temper, I believe it to be shallow, and I can now state my reason in comparatively few words. That reason is that, so long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but *as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term.* . . . I think, therefore, that however particular questions connected with our individual destinies may be answered, it is only by acknowledging them as genuine questions and living in the sphere of thought which they open up, that we become profound. But to live thus is to be religious, so I unhesitatingly repudiate the survival theory of religion as being founded on an egregious mistake. It does not fol-

low, because our ancestors made so many errors of fact, and mixed them with their religion, that we should therefore leave off being religious at all. By being religious, we establish ourselves in possession of ultimate reality at the only points at which reality is given us to guard. Our responsible concern is with our private destiny, after all."

Here we must take our leave of this very suggestive and interesting study—interesting not merely to the psychologist or the theologian, but to the student of human nature and human life in general. As we have seen, Prof. James does not claim for these lectures that they constitute in any sense a contribution to theological knowledge; they are simply what they profess to be—a series of studies on the religious acts and states of the soul considered purely as psychological phenomena. After all, what seems to us to give its chief value to this work is the fact that the religious phenomena therein set forth are told by those who experienced them in their own words, which thus constitute a mass of testimony to the power of religious belief upon the heart and life of man.

W. S. BISHOP.

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ENGLISH IDEALS IN EDUCATION.

AN AMERICAN AT OXFORD. By John Corbin. Illustrated. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1902.

We are very busily engaged nowadays discussing educational ideals, and thereby at least show some discontent with present conditions. Mr. John Corbin, who was at one time a student of Harvard, spent later also some time at Oxford, and gives the impressions of his experience. On the whole, he is very much in love with his new *alma mater*. Of the social and athletic sides, this hardly admits of any qualification. Likewise, educationally, he is of the same opinion in essentials—for he has found the means and the results too congenial, even though some things do compel explanation. The spiritual aspects of Oxford life he hardly suggests, but we know, too, spiritual forces have proceeded from Oxford, as world movements testify.